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Japan

Market Development Reports

Food Business Line

Periodic Press Translations from ATO Tokyo

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Report Highlights: From America's largest overseas market for food and agricultural exports as translated from Japan's mass media and food press. This issue includes: *Carrefour Japan* announces plans to improve customer service; Japan's edible oil industry experiences further restructuring with *Nisshin Oil*, *Rinoru Oil Mills*, and *Nikko Oil* launching a new joint holding company; The newly renovated Marunouchi Building, one of Japan's newest major additions to a continuing trend in multipurpose office space, is enjoying much success with its offerings for restaurants and *sozai* (take-out) foods and; U.S. cooperators take advantage of growing popularity in Japan for nuts such as almonds and walnuts.

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Retail/Wholesale

- *Carrefour Japan* plans to hire 180 full-time permanent employees next spring, more than twice the number for this year. By increasing personnel that are well-versed in the local retail market, it is hoped that this will improve efforts to meet the Japanese consumer's needs. (a 10/3)
- *CGC Japan* plans to introduce a new product line named "New Technology Pascal," which utilizes a new ultra-high pressure sterilization process. The first product is an individually packaged retort rice product, advertised for its texture as well as its food safety appeal. (b 10/10)

Food Service

- *Reins International*, an operator of the "Gyukaku" *yakiniku* grilled beef restaurant chain, announced development of a new charcoal grill restaurant chain called "Aburi Gyukaku." In the new restaurant, *Reins International* introduced grilled seafood, vegetable and beef. It hopes to increase the number of outlets to about 50 by the year 2005. (b 10/12)
- Major hospital meal provider, *Mefos* announced plans to start a healthy food delivery business by the end of October in cooperation with the *Hotel Okura Group*, mainly targeting customers suffering from obesity or diabetes. Customers will be able to place orders by fax or phone from a selection of about 15 varieties of seasonal food menus. Initially, *Mefos* will first distribute the menus to the residents along the Tokyu railway line and then start an on-line ordering system by the end of this year. (a 10/14)

Food Processing/New Products/Market Trends

- *Nisshin Oil*, *Rinoru Oil Mills*, and *Nikko Oil* launched a new joint holding company *Nisshin Oillio Group* on October 1. This will be the second giant edible oil group to be launched since formation of the *Honen Ajinomoto Oil Group* this year. The reorganization of the entire edible oil industry is likely to be completed when *Yoshiwara Oil* joins the *Honen Ajinomoto Oil Group* next April. (f 10/1)
- *Nippon Meat Packers'* "Schau Essen" pork sausages are selling well in its reappearance in local stores. The product was previously pulled from the shelves in the midst of the firm's labeling scandal. Based on in-store surveys by *Nikkei POS*, sales of the product ranked third for most sausage product sold, showing strong consumer loyalty despite the previous incident. (b 10/5)
- The newly renovated Marunouchi Building is enjoying crowds of people day and night after its initial opening in September. About 2.8 million people have already visited the building, located in the central business area near Tokyo station. It has been very popular with housewives who show up in large numbers filling all restaurants to capacity during the day time. Consequently, lunchtime office workers have had to buy lunch from Marunouchi Building vendors offering *sozai* (take-out) side dishes. (b 10/8)
- The Japan Ministry of Finance is considering an increase in taxes on tobacco and *happoshu* (low malt beer) next fiscal year as part of an effort to secure extra revenues to fund planned tax cuts

worth over one trillion yen aimed at reviving the economy. Demand for *happoshu* is growing due to its low cost compared to regular beer. However, the Ministry is considering the possibility of raising the levy on *happoshu* closer to that imposed on regular beer. (a 10/13)

ATO/Cooperator/Competitor Activities/Trade Shows

- *Carrefour Japan* held a wine fair in Japan from October 4 thru October 14. Plans were for it to be the largest ever in Japan. More than 500 wines along with cheese and bread were planned for sale during the period, with exclusive wine tasting sessions planned during the weekend. (a 10/2)
- Nuts such as almonds and walnuts are rapidly gaining popularity due mainly to their health benefits. For example, the import volume of almonds increased by 30% between the period of January-July 2002, compared to the same period last year. U.S. cooperators and related organizations are hammering out plans for various promotional campaigns in order to take advantage of this growing popularity. *U.S. exports of almonds to Japan have increased by approximately 20 percent during the same period.* (f 10/10)

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Sources

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|----------------------------------|---|
| (a) The Japan Economic Newspaper | (b) The Nikkei Marketing Journal |
| (c) The Japan Food Journal | (d) The Beverage & Food News Commentary |
| (e) The Japan Food News | (f) The Food Industry News |

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